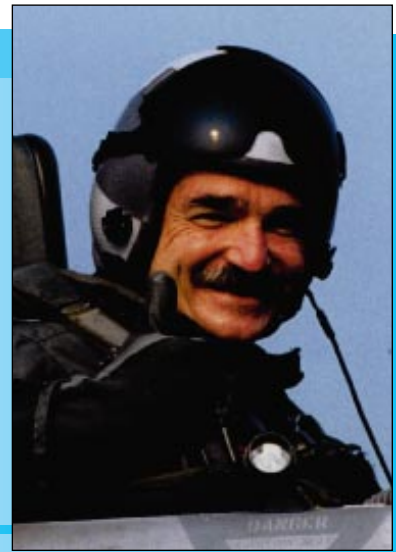


Touched by a

Blue Angel

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Each one of us—from the youngest aircrewman to the squadron skipper, from the newly winged ensign or second lieutenant to the Chief of Naval Operations—can recall that time when we pondered a future in Naval Aviation and decided: “That’s for me!”

For many of us, the seed of that idea was planted in our minds by an angel . . . a *Blue Angel* to be precise. And it was the precision in every aspect of the performance, from the pilots marching to their waiting aircraft to the carrier “break” prior to landing that caught our imaginations and fueled our desires to be a part of it all. The youngsters in the photo below represent thousands of young Americans—past, present and future—who, after seeing firsthand the awesome teamwork that is the lifeblood of Naval Aviation, decided that they just might find a place for themselves on the Navy-Marine Corps team. And it’s those youngsters who are the real story of the *Blue Angels*. Numerous books and articles focus on the aircraft and their crews, but the mission of the U.S. Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron can be summed up in one word: recruiting.

It all started after WW II when Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Admiral Chester W. Nimitz observed that the newly emerging U.S. Air Force, with its bases scattered throughout the country, was luring young Americans into the same high-flying careers that were also

available in the U.S. Navy. Hampered by the fact that our “airfields” were at sea, our bases were on the coastlines and that most Americans knew about the Navy only from newsreel footage, the CNO directed that “a flight exhibition team be organized within the Naval Air Advanced Training Command to represent the Navy at air shows and similar events.” Lieutenant Commander Roy M. “Butch” Voris, ace and combat aviator in the Pacific campaign, was selected to organize and lead the

U.S. Navy Flight Exhibition Team. Voris knew that the team had to be the best, they had to be the best while being safe, and he was determined to achieve both.

If a certain senior officer had had his way, the team would have been called the *Blue Lancers*, but none of the pilots liked that name. Paging through the *New Yorker* magazine while on the road with the show, number 2 pilot Lieutenant Wick Wickendoll spotted an article about one of the city’s hottest nightclubs, the Blue Angel Cafe, and said: “Boss, this is it!” The team promptly leaked the name to reporters who put it in bold headlines, calling them **THE BLUE ANGELS**. Thus, 50 years ago, a legend was born.

Today, the *Blues* are the premier “power tool” in the Navy Recruiting Command’s workshop. All of the team members represent us as recruiters, goodwill ambassadors, dream fulfillers for young children through the Make a Wish Foundation, volunteers for countless worthy causes and, most importantly, living examples of the Navy adventure to the folks in our hometowns throughout America.

On their 50th anniversary, we salute those members of the Navy-Marine Corps team who represent the best of what each of us strives to be: dedicated, talented team players. Bravo Zulu and congratulations to the U.S. Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron, the *Blue Angels*, as we look forward to 50 more years of world-class professional excellence!



PH1 (NAC) Casey Akins